

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant majority leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, at the direction of the majority leader, I announce there will be no further votes today. The next vote is scheduled for 4:30 on Monday. It will be a cloture motion filed by Senator MCCONNELL relative to the bill on the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

The Senate will be in session tomorrow at 9:30 for morning business and debate. Members who care to may come to the floor to discuss issues of their choosing. I would say on behalf of the majority leader as well our frustration that we have reached this point. We have a deadline of February 1 to enact this new FISA act. The President has argued he needs this to keep America safe. We have offered to the Republican side an extension of the current law so that the President would be able to continue this policy and program uninterrupted for a month, several months, as long as a year and a half, and we have been rejected. The Republican leadership on the floor has argued they do not want to extend this program as we try to work out differences on the issue of the liability of telephone companies that provided information to the Federal Government. That is unfortunate.

It is also unfortunate that we had Members of the Senate come to the floor in good faith to offer amendments to this bill. I can tell you, having spoken to those on our side of the aisle, each of the amendments was prepared and offered to the Republican side for their review, no surprises. We understood that they would offer their own amendments in response. That is certainly proper. It would engage the Senate in debate on some very important issues relative to national security. But it was the decision of the Republican leadership they wanted no amendments, they wanted no debate. They wanted the President's version of this bill, take it or leave it. They would rather run the risk of closing down this program of surveillance of terrorists than perhaps give us a chance for a few amendments to be debated and voted on in the next 24 hours. That is an unfortunate start to the 2008 Senate session.

In the last year of the Senate, the Republicans were responsible for some 62 efforts to stop debate on the floor, 62 efforts at filibusters, which is a modern record; in fact, it is an all-time record for the Senate; 62 different occasions the Republicans engaged in filibusters to stop debate.

We were hopeful as we talked about the stimulus package and bipartisanship, working together, that things had changed. And then within a matter of hours, the Republican leadership came to the floor to stop us from having any amendments, any debate in a timely fashion on this important bill, and also to stop us from extending this bill, this law, so the President can use this program, and that America would never have its security at risk.

I think the Republicans have taken an untenable, indefensible position. They do not want the law extended so the President can use it. They do not want us to enact any revision to the law or even debate it on the off chance that there might be a change. They have taken the position it is their way or the highway.

Well, we will have a vote on Monday, an unfortunate vote that would have been avoided with a modicum of cooperation here in the Senate.

So there will be no further votes today; the first vote will be at 4:30 on Monday.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Florida). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### THE STIMULUS

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I wish to take the floor for a few minutes before we adjourn today to talk about the economy and about this stimulus package we are hearing the House is developing and will send over here some time in the next few weeks.

I must say, first, it is clear that there is a downturn in the economy that is causing a lot of anxiety among all Americans. It is clear we need to do something. Over the last 6 years, I must admit, I have been disturbed by the lack of fiscal discipline by this White House and by this Congress, as the deficits have piled up.

Think about this: In 2001, when President Clinton left office, we had surpluses. We were going to have surpluses as far as the eye could see. We were talking about paying down the national debt, saving our Social Security system. That all changed. It all changed because the new President came in and said: What is more important than paying down the debt, paying our bills, putting us on a sound fiscal basis? What is more important than that is tax cuts for the wealthiest people in our country. Oh, sure, everybody got a little bit, but a lion's share of it went to the wealthiest in our country.

I guess I shouldn't have been too surprised. The President's philosophy has always been one of trickle down, trick-

le-down economics. How many times do we have to keep enduring trickle-down economics when time after time we know it does not work? It may give you a little bit of a good feeling for awhile, but it always leads to disastrous consequences.

So that is what we had in 2001. We had trickle down, give the most to the wealthiest in the country; it will trickle down to everybody. It didn't trickle down. What it did was widen the gap between the rich and the poor. The very highest income earners in our country have gotten wealthy beyond Midas' imagination and the rest are down here, and the poor have gotten poorer and they have gotten to be a bigger part of our population. Children in poverty have gone up since 2001.

I suppose it was a nice dinner party for those who were at the top of the ladder for the last 5, 6 years, a wonderful ride, but look what it has led to. Now we have these huge deficits. The debt has piled up. We are now stuck in a war in Iraq that is costing us \$10 billion to \$12 billion a month, with no end in sight. Still we have these big tax cuts for the very wealthy going on and on.

Again, here we are. And, now we have a downturn. What do we do? We have to do something. There are times when deficit spending in the short term is prudent and necessary. That is when there is an economic downturn. But during the times when the economy is sound, that is when you ought to be paying down your debts. When the economy was sound for the last few years, we gave it all away. We gave it away, again, mostly to the wealthiest in our country. Now we are in a situation in which we want to ward off a deep recession.

Recessions always hurt those at the bottom worst. And now we are going to have to, because we don't have any money, do it with deficit spending, which I don't like, but we are going to have to do it.

I think it behooves us if, in fact, we are going to have to ask our grandkids and great-grandkids to pay the bill—that is what the national debt is; they have to pay it—if we are going to borrow from them for right now to get us through a recession, then we ought to be prudent about what we do with that money and how we do it.

I guess from my standpoint, taking a bunch of money and throwing it out there is not the way to do it. Don't throw money at the problem. That is why I have very serious reservations about what I hear coming from the other body. We haven't seen anything. All I know is what I read in the paper and see on the news and what I hear about what the White House is doing.

I have no doubt the House is acting in good faith. I am all for a bipartisan solution. But I remind both the President and my colleagues that we in the Senate are going to have some say-so in shaping the final stimulus package. Any bill that comes from the House is